

Imported Organic Agricultural Products

We have been asked how will imported organic agricultural product be handled under the National Organic Standards?

The National Organic Standards require all agricultural products sold, labeled or represented as organic in the United States be certified by a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) accredited certifying agent.

However, in lieu of organic certification by a USDA accredited certifying agent, imported organic agricultural product may be sold in the United States if they have been certified and recognized through (1) a USDA recognition of conformity assessment or (2) an equivalency determination.

Under the recognition of conformity assessment option, imported organic agricultural product may be sold, labeled, or represented as organically produced if the product is produced and handled to the National Organic Standards and certified by an accredited certifying agent recognized by USDA. Recognition of certifying agents will be determined by USDA, based upon the request of a foreign government, that the foreign certifying agent's government is able to assess and accredit certifying agents as meeting the requirements of the USDA National Organic Program.

Imported organic agricultural product may also be sold, labeled or represented as organic when USDA has determined a foreign government's organic certification program to be equivalent to that of the NOP. Equivalent means that USDA has determined that a foreign government's technical requirements and conformity assessment system adequately fulfills the objectives of the Organic Food Production Act and its implementing regulations. Determinations of equivalency are the most complex and time-consuming types of import arrangements to establish.

The following information provides an update regarding organic trade discussions between the United States and foreign governments:

Recognition of Conformity Assessment

USDA is currently working with the following foreign governments to recognize their ability to assess and accredit certifying agents as meeting the requirements of the USDA National Organic Program:

New Zealand
United Kingdom
Spain
Canada (and two of its provinces)
Israel
Denmark

Equivalence Determination

An equivalency determination is facilitated at the formal request of a foreign government. USDA is currently working with the following foreign governments to determine whether their organic certification programs are equivalent to the technical requirements and conformity assessment system of the NOP.

India

Japan